

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 KINSHA 03043 020937Z

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 PC-01 BIB-01 AID-05 /090 W

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AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY PARIS

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AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION NATO

SECDEF WASH DC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER/EC34-7

DIA WASH DC

USIA WASHDC

AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 3043

PASS PEACE CORPS

USIA FOR IAA, IOP

LONDON FOR SCHAUFLE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PINS, AEMR, CG, AO

SUBJECT: BORDER ATTACK ON ZAIRE: MISHANDLING THE NEWS

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PAGE 02 KINSHA 03043 020937Z

1. SUMMARY: THE GOZ INFORMATION POLICY AND PRACTICES SINCE THE SHABA BORDER ATTACK OFFER A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF HOW NOT TO MANAGE THE NEWS. EQUALLY DISTURBING, HOWEVER, IS THE GOZ'S CONTINUED INSISTENCE THAT THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO HANDLE THE FOREIGN PRESS. THIS VIRTUALLY GUARANTEES A RUNNING BATTLE BETWEEN THE GOZ AND THE FOREIGN MEDIA WITH CONCOMITANT CONFUSION AS TO WHAT ACTUALLY IS HAPPENING IN SHABA. END SUMMARY.

2. FOR THE GOZ, THE MEDIA'S ROLE IS TO "EDUCATE, TRAIN AND INFORM". THE ORDER OF THESE TASKS IS INTENTIONAL: INFORMING THE PUBLIC AS TO WHAT IS HAPPENING IS INFINITELY LESS IMPORTANT THAN SHAPING AND MOLDING ZAIRIAN MINDS. WHILE THIS MAY BE AN ACCEPTABLE OBJECTIVE FOR A DOMESTIC INFORMATION POLICY (AT LEAST THE POINT MAY BE DEBATEABLE), IT CAN ONLY RESULT IN CAVERNOUS CREDITABILITY GAPS WHEN NEWS EVENTS ARE REPORTED BY THE FOREIGN MEDIA.

3. DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF THE SHABA FIGHTING, THE GOZ'S NATURAL INCLINATION WAS TO SAY NOTHING. IT MATTERED NOT THAT EDUCATED ZAIRIANS WERE TUNING TO INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTERS TO RECEIVE THE NEWS WHICH THEIR GOVERNMENT WAS WITHHOLDING. NOR THAT A PAUCITY OF HARD NEWS WOULD ONLY ENTICE THE FOREIGN MEDIA EVEN MORE TO SEND THEIR OWN STAFFERS TO ZAIRE.

4. THE MARCH 19 VISIT TO KOLWEZI, COMPLETE WITH PRESIDENT MOBUTU PILOTING A FAZ C-130 AIRCRAFT, WAS THE GOZ'S VERSION OF A MEDIA EVENT. SLOW IN COMING, TO BE SURE, IT AIMED AT SHOWING THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PRESS THAT MOBUTU WAS VERY MUCH IN COMMAND. AND WHILE A VISIT TO MUTSHATSHA WAS SCHEDULED FOR THE SAME DAY, IT WAS CANCELLED WHEN PRESIDENT MOBUTU HAD TO RETURN TO KINSHASA. THE NEXT DAY, HOWEVER, A REDUCED NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS DID SPEND TWO HOURS IN MUTSHATSHA. THAT, IN THE GOZ'S EYES, WAS A CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF ITS OPENNESS, ITS WILLINGNESS TO TELL ALL.

5. YET DURING THE NEXT WEEK, AS THE MILITARY SITUATION DETERIORATED STEADILY, THE GOZ INSISTED THAT ALL WAS WELL. FINALLY, AFTER REPEATED REPORTS THAT MUTSHATSHA HAD INDEED FALLEN, THE GOZ  
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PAGE 03 KINSHA 03043 020937Z

SCHEDULED ANOTHER VISIT TO THE FRONT - ONLY TO HAVE IT, TOO, CANCELLED, AT THE LAST MINUTE. STILL, DAILY BRIEFINGS BY ZAIRE PRESS AGENCY (AZAP) DELEGATE-GENERAL ELEBE GAVE THE FOREIGN PRESS ALL - I.E., LITTLE IF ANYTHING EXCEPT CONSTANT DENIALS - IT SHOULD HAVE. BECAUSE OF A FALSE REPORT ON THE FALL OF KOLWEZI, THE KINSHASA AFP CORRESPONDENT WAS FORCED TO MAKE A HUMILIATING TELEVISED "MEA CULPA" AS THE PRICE FOR REMAINING IN ZAIRE.

6. MEANWHILE, OF COURSE, THE GOZ-CONTROLLED MEDIA STRESSED THE "EDUCATION" AND "TRAINING" FUNCTIONS BY A STREAM OF "LET'S SUPPORT THE 'GUIDE'" TYPE EDITORIALS, RATHER THAN THE "INFORMATION" ROLE. AS THE FOREIGN MEDIA CONTINUED TO UNCOVER MORE INCRIMINATING REPORTS, THE GOZ STILL DENIED THE FALL OF MUTSHATSHA, FOR EXAMPLE. THESE DENIALS, HOWEVER, WERE NOT CARRIED IN THE LOCAL MEDIA BUT RATHER WENT OUT ON THE AZAP INTERNATIONAL WIRE MONITORED BY REUTERS AND AGENCE FRANCE PRESS. FOMIN NGUZA'S DENIAL OF A "LEMONDE" STORY ABOUT HIS BEING NAMED PRIME MINISTER NEVER SURFACED LOCALLY, BUT WAS EXCLUSIVELY CARRIED ON THE AZAP WIRE EXCHANGED WITH THE BRITISH AND FRENCH WIRE SERVICES.

7. TO THE GOZ, THE MEDIA SHOULD REMAIN DOCILE AND OBEDIENT UNTIL CALLED UPON TO CRANK IT OUT FOR THE GOOD OF THE COUNTRY. OBVIOUSLY, THIS LINE HAS NO TAKERS IN THE WESTERN PRESS.

8. BECAUSE OF THE FOREIGN MEDIA'S REFUSAL TO ROLL OVER ON GOZ COMMAND, THEY WERE HARSHLY ATTACKED MARCH 31 FOR SPREADING "FANTASIES AND INCORRECT REPORTS" (AZAP'S ELEBE) OR "SLANDEROUS AND CAPRICIOUS" COVERAGE "AIMED PRIMARILY AT WEAKENING THE MORALE OF ZAIRIANS, DEFAMING THE FAZ, SOWING DISSENSION IN THE RANKS OF THE MPR AND PROVOKING SKEPTICISM AMONG OUR ALLIES" (VOICE OF ZAIRE RADIO COMMENTARY).

9. WHILE THE NOON BRIEFING WARNED THE FOREIGN MEDIA THAT THE GOZ MIGHT BE FORCED TO "REVIEW THE STATUS" OF THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS, WITHIN SIX HOURS A CENSORSHIP SYSTEM WAS INSTALLED AT THE POST & TELECOMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IF AND HOW THE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 KINSHA 03043 020937Z

GOZ WOULD MONITOR THE INTERNATIONAL TELEPHONE CALLS THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE MEDIA USE TO FILE THEIR COPY.

10. AND SO THE BATTLE CONTINUES. THE GOZ APPLYING ITS DOMESTIC STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS TO AN INTERNATIONAL MEDIA CORPS WHICH COULD NOT CARE LESS ABOUT "EDUCATING" OR "TRAINING" READERS/ LISTENERS/VIEWERS. HARD NEWS IS WHAT COUNTS - BUT NOT TO THE GOZ.

11. THAT THE VOICE OF AMERICA, FOR INSTANCE, COULD BE A USG AGENCY AND YET MAINTAIN AN INDEPENDENT NEWS SERVICE IS BEYOND THE BELIEF OF THE GOZ LEADERSHIP, NO MATTER HOW CAREFULLY EXPLAINED. WHAT PAINS THE GOZ EVEN MORE IS THAT EDUCATED ZAIRIANS ARE AVID SHORTWAVE RADIO LISTENERS (BRUSSELS, VOA, FRANCE-INTER, IN THAT ORDER) -- AND THAT MEANS THEY ARE BEING "INFORMED" RATHER THAN SCHOOLED IN THE MPR/GOZ DICTA OF THE DAY.

12. THE NEXT STEP SEEMS TO BE EXCLUDING THE FOREIGNERS FROM SHABA. THAT COULD WELL BE FORTHCOMING BY THE EXPULSION OF ONE OR MORE REPORTERS FROM ZAIRE. UNFORTUNATELY, WHILE THIS MAY SATISFY THE GOZ'S WHIM, IT WILL SHED VERY LITTLE LIGHT UPON WHAT IS HAPPENING IN SHABA, WHICH IS WHY THE FOREIGN MEDIA ARE HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE.  
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